

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 16, 2009

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND
FORESTRY

BANKING, HOUSING AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND
TRANSPORTATION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

INDIAN AFFAIRS

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
United States Department of Agriculture
14th and Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to seek clarification about your recently reported comments calling into question the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) own analysis of H.R. 2454, the House cap-and-trade legislation.

I appreciated reviewing the testimony of the USDA Chief Economist from the House subcommittee hearing two weeks ago. Over the course of two days, he provided 61 pages worth of testimony, which he stated was a summary of newly "refined and expanded" analysis by USDA. I have worked with Dr. Glauber and have great respect for him. While some of the testimony was troubling from a policy perspective—especially the prediction that the USDA-backed bill would result in 59 million acres of cropland and pasture coming out of production by 2050—it was encouraging to see that USDA had completed a more in-depth analysis of cap-and-trade legislation. Considering some of my colleagues and I requested the analysis roughly five months ago, I have been quite anxious to review it.

It was confusing, then, to read that you have called into question an analysis produced by your department—an analysis that has not even been made available to the public yet, and that apparently took five months to produce.

What did you mean when you stated you "think there are other models that are more current and complete," that "might" lead to "different conclusions?" Are you discounting USDA's own testimony before the House—testimony that most certainly went through the White House interagency clearance process with review and sign-off by the Office of Management and Budget, Environmental Protection Agency, Council on Environmental Quality, and the President's climate czar, among others? Are you saying that the analysis USDA reported to have completed only two weeks ago is not current or complete? How are members of Congress to interpret your Chief Economist's testimony, now that you have called the underlying analysis into question?

I hope that after five months of working to produce a more in-depth analysis of cap-and-trade legislation, USDA's analysis is current and complete. Additionally, I hope the USDA analysis is robust enough to not be out of date before it is even released, and not be inferior to a university analysis that is over a month old. Your recent comments add some confusion to the picture. Any clarity you can provide regarding this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns", is written over the printed name.

Mike Johanns
United States Senator